

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02108 131612Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 EUR-12 HA-05 ACDA-12
SSM-03 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
OMB-01 MCT-01 NEAE-00 /095 W
-----124766 131614Z /46

O R 131526Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7609

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2108

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: SY LE MOPS PLO PEPR

SUBJ: COMMENTS OF PRO-SYRIAN BA'ATH PARTY LEADER ASIM QANSUH

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON APRIL 13, THE HEAD OF THE PRO-SYRIAN BA'ATH PARTY OF LEBANON, ASIM QANSUH, SAID THAT THE FIGHTING IN AYN AR-RUMANNAH HAD INTENSIFIED BETWEEN 10:30 AND 12:30 HOURS ON APRIL 13 BECAUSE PHALANGE MILITIA HAD TRIED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LULL AND MOVE THEIR FIGHTERS UP CLOSER TO SYRIAN FORCES. SYRIANS HAD FIRED TO DRIVE PHALANGE BACK. HE SAID THAT SINCE APRIL 9, SEVEN SYRIAN SOLDIERS HAD BEEN KILLED AND 45 WOUNDED, AS WELL AS 40 CHRISTIANS KILLED AND AT LEAST 150 WOUNDED. (COMMENT: OTHER RELIABLE SOURCES SAY SYRIANS ADMIT TO 19 KILLED AS OF APRIL 12.)

2. CONTRARY TO MOST SPECULATION, QANSUH CONTINUED, THE FIGHTING HAD MADE THE SYRIANS MORE RATHER THAN LESS DETERMINED TO KEEP
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02108 131612Z

THEIR ARMY IN LEBANON. PRIDE WAS NOW INVOLVED; SARG COULD NOT WITHDRAW ITS ARMY AS IF IT WERE BEING DRIVEN OUT.

3. QANSUH SAID THE LATEST AYN AR-RUMANNAH/SHIYAH AFFAIR HAD STARTED OVER A FIST FIGHT ON APRIL 9 BETWEEN TWO CHRISTIAN RESIDENTS OF AYN AR-RUMANNAH AND A MUSLIM RESIDENT OF SHIYAH IN FRONT OF LEBANON MOVIE THEATER ON THE OLD SAIDA ROAD. AS A

RESULT OF THIS ALTERCATION, BOTH SIDES WENT AND GOT FRIENDS WITH GUNS, AND THE SHOOTING STARTED. (COMMENT: THIS, THE SYRIAN VERSION, IS ONLY ONE OF MANY ON HOW THE FIGHTING STARTED. END COMMENT.)

4. THE SUDANESE ADF SOLDIERS HAD BEEN UNABLE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION, SO SYRIAN SOLDIERS WERE FORCED TO INTERVENE. WHEN THEY DID SO, THEY WERE UNDER STRICT INSTRUCTIONS TO TREAT BOTH SIDES EQUITABLY. THE SYRIANS HAD FIRED ON BOTH ARMED MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS. SYRIANS HAD THEN DEPLOYED SOLDIERS TO OCCUPY POSITIONS ALONG BOTH SIDES OF THE CONFRONTATION LINE. THE FIGHTERS IN SHIYAH STOPPED FIRING AND ALLOWED THE SYRIANS TO TAKE UP POSITIONS. THE CHRISTIANS, HOWEVER, CONTINUED TO SHOOT, AND THE INCIDENT TURNED INTO A BATTLE BETWEEN SYRIANS AND CHRISTIANS IN AYN AR-RUMANNAH.

5. QANSUH SAID THAT THE BA'ATH PARTY AND THE SYRIAN ARMY HAD MADE IT VERY CLEAR TO THE LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS IN SHIYAH THAT THEY WERE NOT TO FIRE ON THE CHRISTIANS. THE SYRIANS HAD WARNED THAT THEY WOULD SHOOT ANY LEFTISTS OR PALESTINIANS WHO DID.

6. QANSUH SAID THAT HE WAS IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH THE SYRIAN COLONEL COMMANDING THE SYRIAN FORCES ON THE SCENE, AND HE WAS URGING HIM STRONGLY TO REACT WITH RESTRAINT AND NOT TO RESPOND TO MINOR HARASSMENT. QANSUH APPEALED TO THE "AMERICANS" TO GET

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 02108 131612Z

IN TOUCH WITH THE LEBANESE FRONT AND URGE SIMILAR RESTRAINT.

7. QANSUH NOTED THAT HE BELIEVED DANY CHAMOUN WAS DOING HIS BEST TO TRY TO KEEP THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL, BUT THAT HE COULD NOT CONTROL THE NLP FIGHTERS IN THE AREA. (QANSUH DID NOT MAKE ANY REFERENCE TO BACHIR GEMAYEL.)

8. QANSUH SAID HE BELIEVED THAT WITHIN THE NEXT 24 HOURS AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE WORKED OUT TO CONTAIN THIS INCIDENT. HE SAID THE SYRIANS REALIZED THAT THEY HAD TO PAY SOME DEFERENCE TO LEBANESE FRONT'S SENSIBILITIES. THE ADF WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, NOT TRY TO POST SYRIAN TROOPS IN AYN AR-RUMANNAH PERMANENTLY, BUT WOULD SEND SUDANESE TROOPS BACK IN AFTER THE FIGHTING WAS OVER.

9. QANSUH SAID HE HAD MET THE EVENING OF APRIL 12 WITH YASIR ARAFAT. THE LATTER HAD INDICATED HE HAD NO INTEREST IN PROVOKING A LEBANESE CIVIL WAR. QANSUH COMMENTED THAT HE BELIEVED THIS WAS TRUE, BUT THAT LEBANESE LEFTISTS WOULD HAVE AN INTEREST IN RENEWED CIVIL WAR, BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN THE BIG LOSERS IN THE 1975/76 CONFLICT.

10. QANSUH CLAIMED THAT THE SYRIAN SOCIAL NATIONAL PARTY (COMMON-

LY REFERRED TO AS THE PPS) WAS VERY HAPPY TO SEE THE CHRISTIANS
BEING POUNDED BY THE SYRIANS. QANSUH COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS A
MANIFESTATION OF A CHARACTERISTIC SHARED BY ALL LEBANESE POLI-
TICAL GROUPS, MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN, FROM THE FAR LEFT TO THE
FAR RIGHT: "NO NATIONAL SPIRIT." IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, NONE
WAS WILLING TO PLACE NATIONAL ABOVE PAROCHIAL INTERESTS.
PARKER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, PARTY LEADERS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT02108
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780159-0373
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780462/aaaacasq.tel
Line Count: 123
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b8fe39b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2985910
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COMMENTS OF PRO-SYRIAN BA'ATH PARTY LEADER ASIM QANSUH
TAGS: MOPS, PEPR, SY, LE, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b8fe39b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014